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Navy & Marine Corps Medical News

Mn-98-32

August 14, 1998

This service distributes news and information to Sailors and Marines, their families, civilian employees, and retired Navy and Marine Corps families. Further dissemination of this email is encouraged.

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Headline: USNS Comfort medical team relieves child's pain

By JO1 F. R. Keeley, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda

ABOARD USNS Comfort--A Lithuanian mother, anxious to correct a life-long medical problem of her child, took advantage of the USNS Comfort's (T-AH 20) participation in Baltic Challenge '98 to seek medical assistance. The ship made a scheduled stop at Klaipeda, Lithuania, during the annual international military exercise involving eleven European nations and the United States.

"I am writing to you in great hope," Tatjana Tvardauskiene wrote in a letter seeking help for her 13-year old son, Vidmantas, who suffered from a rare birth defect.

Tatjana, said, "my son was born on December 13, 1984, with a big tumor on the back of his head. Since that day my family and myself live in hope that God will [have] mercy [on] us and will not deprive us of the child."

CDR Ross Moquin, MC, the neurosurgeon aboard Comfort, described Vidmantas' tumor as an "osseous horn," which is a growth that started before Vidmantas was born. This growth pushed out of his skull and continued to grow under his scalp, giving him a horn-like protrusion. The growth also caused a permanent tennis ball-sized hole in his skull and continued to grow as the boy matured, slowly creating internal pressure and pain. Moquin said the condition is rare, but left untreated it could have devastating and life threatening effects.

Vidmantas had been hospitalized 14 times. In one surgery attempt, some of the growth was removed, but Russian surgeons

stopped because Vidmantas was losing too much blood. Since then, doctors from Lithuania to Moscow have offered no encouragement and say they have done all they can. "Perhaps in America," they say with a shrug.

When Tatjana read a story in her local newspaper about the American hospital ship Comfort, anchored near Klaipeda, she contacted the United States embassy, which worked with the Comfort to expedite Tatjana's request. Then the embassy called and told her the Comfort's doctors would see her.

After completing examinations, Moquin decided to do the procedure. But first he collaborated via satellite with colleagues at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. They concurred with his diagnosis and surgical plan.

During the operation, Tatjana stayed by her son's side, soothing him with her touch and reassuring him in a low voice, as only a mother can.

The operation took approximately seven hours. Moquin was guided by views of Vidmantas' head on a computer monitor. Growths of this kind have many blood vessels and each one had to be sealed.

Finally, all the growth was removed. A quest of great hope, covering 13 years and many heartaches, ended in great joy and great "comfort" aboard an able and willing Navy hospital ship.

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Headline: Sailors save Lithuanian man from drowning

By JO1 F. R. Keeley, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda

ABOARD USNS Comfort--While the USNS Comfort (T-AH 20), was visiting Klaipeda, Lithuania, four sailors from the ship helped save a local resident from drowning. Aviation Boatswain Mate First Class Edward McCellan and Aviation Boatswain Mate Second Class Anthony Garcia were in a restaurant near the Dane River in Klaipeda, when they noticed a local man on a nearby bridge. Moments later a cry was heard and the man was gone.

The two sailors joined people who rushed to the steep bank of the river. The activity had also attracted the attention of Hospital Corpsmen Third Class Jody Money and Donald Montgomery, who ran to the seawall and saw the man thrashing about in the river.

McCellan and Garcia were preparing to enter the water when two local fishermen in a rowboat came out from under the bridge and approached the victim.

He appeared to fight their attempts to rescue him until he tired and slipped under the water. One of the fishermen grabbed the victim but was unable to pull him into the boat. Garcia climbed down onto a slender ledge just above the water line and leaned out to help bring the man to shore. McCellan grabbed Garcia by the belt and kept him from falling in and helped free Garcia's hands for the rescue. Montgomery and Money came down on the ledge to assist.

The boatmen pushed the victim to the river's edge, where he was grabbed by Garcia and Montgomery and hoisted up on the sidewalk. Montgomery and Money then began checking the

victim's vital signs and checking for possible injuries.

"The victim was conscious and breathing on his own, although his pulse was weak and erratic," said Money.

"I couldn't find any other injuries, so we just looked after him and kept him calm until the local rescue squad arrived," Montgomery said.

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Headline: Diaz to lead Naval Medical Center, San Diego

By JO1 Joe Parker, Naval Medical Center, San

SAN DIEGO--RADM Alberto Diaz, Jr., MC, is the new top doc at Naval Medical Center, San Diego. Diaz relieved VADM Richard Nelson, MC, to become commander of the Navy's largest health care facility.

Now the Navy's Surgeon General, and Chief, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington, D.C., Nelson returned to San Diego for the August 8 change of command ceremony.

"I am really proud of Naval Medical Center, San Diego," Nelson told the audience. "If you get your health care from the Balboa system, you should know that you are being cared for by the men and women of one of the finest institutions in America."

He noted that hard work, dedication, innovation and a shared vision of what the future should be were driving forces behind the hospital's success.

The Balboa facility was recently awarded a three-year accreditation with commendation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organization and the California Medical Association. The Medical Center scored an unprecedented 99 out of a possible 100 following the accreditation review.

Diaz said that Balboa's reputation for excellence was well earned.

"It represents the best and latest we have to offer, from the magnificent physical plant and the most up-to-date equipment, to the superb staff.

"VADM Nelson leaves a legacy of excellence, vision and innovation," he said, "which has set the standard for all other military treatment facilities. I am proud and humbled to be entrusted with command of such an outstanding organization."

Diaz was born on Sept. 2, 1943 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree from George Washington, a Master's degree from Butler University and his M.D. degree from the University of Barcelona School of Medicine in Barcelona, Spain.

Commissioned as a lieutenant in the Medical Corps in April 1976, he reported for duty to the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda. He completed a rotating internship and a residency in psychiatry and served as chief resident during 1979 and 1980.

His career has included, among other positions: staff psychiatrist, psychiatric department chief, command of the U.S. Naval Hospital, Yokosuka and Fleet Surgeon/Director for Fleet

Medical Operations Commander in Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet. Before assuming command of the Naval Medical Center, San Diego, ADM Diaz was the Medical Officer, U.S. Marine Corps at Headquarters, Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

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Headlines: Great Lakes 'commissions' two new clinics  
By LT Youssef H. Aboul-Enein, MSC, USNR

GREAT LAKES, Ill.--The Naval Training Center, Great Lakes, Ill., has two new clinics to serve its customers. In keeping with the Recruit Training Command tradition of naming its buildings after Navy ships, the USS Red Rover medical and dental clinic and the USS Tranquillity (AH 14) medical clinic were recently commissioned in ceremonies at the Great Lake Naval Training Center.

During the Civil War, Red Rover took aboard more than 4,200 union casualties. The Tranquillity was commissioned in April 1945 and responded four months later to the sinking of the USS Indianapolis (CA 35), which suffered a torpedo hit from a Japanese submarine. She arrived at the Palau Islands to take on 166 of the Indianapolis survivors who had endured four days at sea and constant shark attacks.

Among the ceremony attendees were Wayne Ridenhower, who served as a Hospital Apprentice Second Class on the Tranquillity and four survivors of the Indianapolis, who were Tranquillity patients. Also attending were members of the Sisters of the Order of the Holy Cross, whose ancestors served aboard Red Rover during the civil war and were the forerunners of the Navy Nurse Corps.

The two new clinics represent 70,000 square feet of state of the art medical facilities that specialize in treating and medical processing more than 50,000 recruits per year.

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Headline: New program helps veterans find medical records  
From Department of Defense

WASHINGTON--The office of the Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense for Gulf War illnesses is providing a new service to assist Gulf War veterans obtain copies of their inpatient records from hospitals deployed to the Persian Gulf.

Although theater hospital records were never "lost," many veterans were unable to obtain copies of their inpatient records from the Gulf War. Records of hospitalizations in the war were maintained with the hospital and filed with the National Personnel Records Center after the war. Consequently, veterans had to know the name of the facility that treated them in order to request the record either from the hospital or from the archives.

To provide an important service to veterans, members of the Office of the Special Assistant personally visited the records center and sorted through hundreds of boxes and thousands of documents to identify those belonging to Gulf War veterans. Currently, 10,500 inpatient treatment records from Gulf War army facilities have been identified and inventoried.

This equates to 70 percent of their Gulf War inpatient records. Working closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the National Personnel Records Center, and the Department of the Army, the Office of the Special Assistant has also created a database to cross-reference people and social security numbers with hospital records stored in the National Personnel Records Center. The Office of the Special Assistant will continue to identify locations of Army hospital records as well as conduct a similar inventory of the Air Force and Navy hospital records.

The first step in obtaining copies of records is for the veteran to call the Office of the Special Assistant at 1-800-497-6261 for a data search. The veteran will be given specific information that he or she will need to include in the request form that will be mailed to them following the telephone call. A signature of the veteran, or next of kin if the veteran is deceased, is required to obtain copies of hospital treatment records.

This data will also be provided to the VA to be used to help document veterans claims.

"Although we haven't yet identified the locations of all medical records, we believe this is an important service for our veterans," said Dr. Bernard Rostker, the Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense for Gulf War illnesses.

Military personnel commonly have two kinds of medical records. The individual health record accompanies the service member throughout his/her military career while the inpatient hospital treatment record is created by the admitting hospital and documents all care received while a patient is in that hospital. After being discharged from a military hospital, normally, a summary of the care received is also filed with the patient's individual health record.

However, in a dynamic environment such as a war zone, the service member might receive treatment in a number of facilities. Additionally, the individual health record may be filed with the member's unit and not accompany him or her to the hospital.

Consequently, inpatient records may never make it to the member's records. Inpatient records were filed with the last hospital providing care for the patient and eventually forwarded to the record center for archiving. Individual health records of former service members are archived in two locations. The VA, 1-800-827-1000, maintains records for Army veterans discharged after 1992; and Air Force, Marine, and Navy veterans discharged after 1994. For all other records, veterans can write to the National Personnel Records Center, 97000 Page Ave., St. Louis, Mo., 63132.

For more information on this or other Gulf War illnesses issues, see Gulflink, an interactive internet site, at <http://www.gulflink.osd.mil>.

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Headline: Corpsman paints picture of Hospital Corps history  
By Dan Barber, Naval Hospital, Twentynine Palms

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif.--When Hospital Corpsman First Class Danilo Dabu isn't working in the general surgery clinic at Naval Hospital, Twentynine Palms, Calif., he spends time "brushing up" on Hospital Corps history. In addition to his corpsman trade, Dabu is also a talented artist and produced a mural in the hospital depicting Hospital Corps history in various eras.

Dabu created the mural between his busy clinic schedule and during off duty time using black and white reproductions of historical photographs of Navy medical personnel dating to 1888. Also included in the mural are depictions of corpsmen in today's Navy doing their jobs. The modern corpsmen who modeled for the mural are current staff members of the hospital.

At the unveiling ceremony of the mural, Dabu received a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal from the Commanding Officer of Naval Hospital, Twentynine Palms. Dabu was already an accomplished artist when he joined the Navy in 1988, having graduated from the University of Santo Tomas, in Manila with a Bachelor of Fine arts degree in 1976. He also worked at the Massachusetts College of Arts in 1984, as a muralist and sign painter. He went on to work at the new Kensington Art Institute as an assistant art instructor. Dabu also painted a portrait of the late Benigno Aquino, slain husband of past Philippine President, Corazon Aquino. That portrait currently hangs in a Boston museum dedicated to modern Philippine democracy.

At the time Dabu entered the Navy, the draftsman/illustrator rating was closed, so he completed boot camp and Hospital Corpsman "A" school and reported to his first duty station at Naval Medical Center in San Diego.

With achievements as a successful commercial artist, why the Navy?

"I wish to achieve my fullest potential, and to become a Chief Hospital Corpsman and eventually use my art skills to become a medical illustrator and learn computer graphics," said Dabu. "The Navy is the best place for me to achieve my goals."

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Headline: TRICARE questions and answer

Question: What is the TRICARE catastrophic cap?

Answer: There's an upper limit or "catastrophic cap" on what you'll have to pay for health care under TRICARE Prime for Prime enrollment fees, inpatient and outpatient cost-shares, and co-payments for such things as visits to the doctor. There is also a cap on expenses under TRICARE Extra and TRICARE Standard).

For active duty families enrolled in TRICARE Prime, the catastrophic cap is \$1,000 per fiscal year (Oct 1 through Sept 30). For all other TRICARE Prime enrollees, the catastrophic cap is \$3,000 per enrollment year. The cap for TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra programs is \$7,500.

For more information about cost caps, check with your

Health Benefits Advisor or TRICARE Service Center.

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Headline: Healthwatch: Does your computer cause eyestrain?  
From Naval Medical Clinic, Pearl Harbor

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii--Although people who use video display terminals (VDT) on a daily basis frequently complain of eyestrain, research indicates that computers are probably not to blame. The problem may instead be caused by conditions surrounding the computer screen, many of which can be adjusted to alleviate the discomfort.

According to the Prevent Blindness America organization, the eye irritation, fatigue and difficulty in focusing cited by many of those who use VDT's regularly may be the result of poor lighting or improper placement of equipment and supplies. Pre-existing eye problems may also be a contributing factor. In evaluating your workstation, Prevent Blindness America offers some observations about computer use:

- Most users prefer a viewing distance of 20 to 26 inches, a little farther away than for reading printed text.
- The computer screen should be placed slightly below eye level.
- Reference materials should be placed on a document holder and moved close enough to the screen that your head does not have to move to view the material and the terminal.
- Lighting should be modified to eliminate glare and harsh reflections.

For more information about computers and your vision visit the Prevent Blindness America web page at <http://www.preventblindness.org/>

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Comments about and ideas for MEDNEWS are welcome. Story submissions are encouraged. Contact MEDNEWS editor, Earl W. Hicks, at email: [mednews@us.med.Navy.mil](mailto:mednews@us.med.Navy.mil); telephone 202/762-3223, (DSN) 762-3223, or fax 202/762-3224.

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